

# CITIZEN AIRMAN

Volume 74 No. 1

March 2022

## OPERATION ALLIES WELCOME

Reservists help  
Afghan refugees  
transition to a  
new life



Official Magazine of the Air Force Reserve



## NEW YEAR, NEW THREATS

"It doesn't do any good to fake a thing, to fake an ill or a benefit. We have to face the facts the way they are, not the way we wish they were. If we start with a false situation, then we're getting off on the wrong foot to begin with. A clear concise awareness of the exact condition, the exact problem which faces an individual, is his best weapon for coping with it."

- General Curtis E. LeMay

### Heroes of the Air Force Reserve,

As we look over the horizon of 2022, we see a new year with new and more lethal threats.

Our strategic competitors are relentless in their efforts to negate our advantages. Last summer, China tested a long-range missile from a hypersonic launch vehicle. The weapon circled the planet and subsequently impacted a target in China. The speed with which they developed and tested this new capability is concerning. China has rapidly modernized its forces across all domains. This modernization has emboldened them to build bases in Africa, threaten our allies and partners in the maritime domain, and brutally suppress dissent in Hong Kong.

In November, Russia tested a direct ascent anti-satellite missile which destroyed one of its own satellites. The test generated more than 1,500 pieces of trackable space debris and hundreds of thousands of smaller pieces. The threat from the debris cloud caused astronauts on the International Space Station to shelter in place. As a nation, we are still recovering from the SolarWinds supply chain attack first reported in December of 2020, and Russia continues to escalate tensions in both Ukraine and Kazakhstan.

As a nation, we recognize these threats and acknowledge there will be difficult choices in how we invest our resources to successfully compete. While our

adversaries may be relentless, we remain an extremely competent force that is accessible, cost-effective and experienced.

We are a highly accessible force. Reserve Citizen Airmen are consistently ready, willing and able to overcome any challenge. More than 500 Reservists spent the holiday season activated supporting Task Force Holloman and Task Force Liberty, providing for the basic needs of more than 13,000 evacuees from Afghanistan, about half of whom are children.

Our cost-effectiveness is indisputable. Because we are a predominantly part-time force we have significantly lower personnel costs. We are able to provide nearly a quarter of the Total Force's mission capacity on only 3% of the budget with lower operations and maintenance costs.

We make outsized impacts because of our experience. We meld the best of the private and public sectors – utilizing best practices from our military and civilian careers.

Our experience also comes from our diverse backgrounds. Senior Airman Kalmullah Ghobandi and Airman First Class Ahmed Sofizada, who were both Afghan translators, were invaluable to Task Force Holloman's mission with their cultural knowledge and language skills. Senior Airman Ramandeep Kuar, a defender who grew up in India and

speaks Punjabi, Urdu and Hindi, was invaluable in helping the Office of Special Investigation's Locally Employed Persons Screening Team at her deployed location.

Every Reserve Citizen Airman at every level brings unique skills and perspectives that make us a more capable organization.

The challenges we face in the coming year are daunting. However, as a team, we stand ready to meet them with Citizen Airmen who are accessible, cost-effective and experienced.

I am proud to serve with each of you.

**RICHARD W. SCOBEE**  
Lieutenant General, USAF  
Chief of Air Force Reserve  
Commander, Air Force Reserve Command



## REFLECTING ON OUR PAST, PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE

Teammates,

Embarking upon a new year, I wanted to start by taking a few moments to reflect on our past and consider our future.

As we continue to ensure our Professional Development Center courses meet your professional needs, one particular focus area is the rich enlisted heritage of Reserve Citizen Airmen. We don't study enlisted heritage so we can impress our friends and family on trivia nights. We don't pass on stories about Airmen overcoming overwhelming odds to teach you to be timid in times of crisis. We teach you about the Airmen who came before you so you know the impossible can be done.

When the Air Force Reserve was established on April 14, 1948, our enlisted corps was 22,000 strong, comprising just over half the force. Today, there are more than 55,000 enlisted Reserve Citizen Airmen, comprising more than three quarters of the Air Force Reserve.

Since our inception, enlisted Airmen have made outsized contributions in every mission set.

Reserve Citizen Airmen continue to lead in the area of innovation. Staff Sgt. Santosh Devkota, assigned to the 69th Aerial Port Squadron, Joint Base Andrews, Maryland, was recently recognized as the 2020 winner of the Air Force's General Larry O. Spencer Innovation Award for his work on the GATES software, developing an off-line rapid passenger check-in database while deployed to Al Udeid Air Base, Qatar. His zero-cost solution dramatically improved the processing of passengers.

We continue to make significant contributions in the aeromedical career field. Senior Airman Sacia Vieregge, an aeromedical evacuation technician from the 934th Airlift Wing, Minneapolis-St. Paul Air Reserve Station, Minnesota, was recently nominated for the Junior Enlisted Lance P. Sijan Leadership Award at the numbered Air Force level for her contributions while deployed to Ramstein Air Base, Germany. She was part of a unit that transported COVID-19 positive military members from down range back to Ramstein to receive a higher echelon of care.

When our nation needs us, we continue to answer the call. With just over 48 hours notice, Tech. Sgt. Jodi Signer, a loadmaster assigned to the 446th Airlift Wing's 313th Airlift Squadron, Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington, was in the air headed to help with evacuation efforts in Afghanistan. In the time the aircrew spent flying in and out of Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul, they moved troops, vulnerable Afghans and cargo out of the country to secondary locations.

She flew six transport evacuation missions, three of which were into Kabul, and she was instrumental in evacuating just under 300 passengers and approximately 320,000 pounds of cargo over the span of the mission. She was just one of the Airmen who made up 73 crews and hundreds of maintenance, security, medical and support personnel.

These are only a few examples of how you have carried on our heritage of an enlisted force that makes an outsized impact.

Our heritage will continue to grow as we face new challenges. In our current era of strategic competition, we will be met with challenges that will only strengthen our legacy. We must continue to accelerate change and readiness in a predictable manner by developing the force we need.

To that end, we continue to develop our Future Work Environment policy. The widespread effects of the COVID-19 global pandemic have accelerated our reform efforts, and the FWE is an important part of our effort to future-proof our work force and advance our agility and resiliency to meet current and future mission objectives.

To be successful, we must incorporate FWE work-place agilities and flexibilities compatible with the next generation of employees and future operating environments. We are committed to retaining experienced Reserve Citizen Airmen with in-demand skills across all functional platforms, and our overall readiness depends on individual Airmen being able to effectively execute their mission while leveraging FWE capabilities.

The challenges of 2021 have reinforced the value of each individual Reserve Citizen Airman. You are responsible for the progress we have made toward achieving our strategic priorities. Over the past year, we faced extraordinary challenges. In this year, we will be faced with many more. I know we will continue to be ready when our nation needs us.

I am extremely proud of each of you and honored to serve alongside you as your Command Chief.

**TIMOTHY C. WHITE JR.**  
Chief Master Sergeant, USAF  
Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Chief of Air Force Reserve  
Command Chief Master Sergeant, Air Force Reserve Command



# Table of FEATURED STORIES



Army Private First Class Anthony Sanchez

06

## Operation Allies Welcome

Reservists help Afghan refugees transition to new life



Illustration by Anthony Burns

08

## Print to Digital

Citizen Airman magazine gradually transitioning to online only



Staff Sgt. Kristen Pittman

10

## An Innovative Idea

403rd maintainers earn recognition for engine oil pan hoist



## Cover Story

Col. Meredith Seeley, shown here holding a photo of her playing with Afghan children, is one of hundreds of Air Force Reservists who deployed in support of Operation Allies Welcome, the Department of Homeland Security-led effort to support vulnerable Afghans as they safely resettle in the United States. For the story, see page 6. (Original photo by 1st Lt. Crystal Kirchner, photo illustration by Anthony Burns) (Composite photo, background blurred and filters applied)

# CONTENTS

## NEWS & PEOPLE

<b>Fighter to the Finish</b> Oldest F-16 pilot in the Reserve retires . . . . .	<b>13</b>
<b>Not Your Average Senior Airman</b> Reservist leaves life in Nigeria, fulfills dream of serving . . . . .	<b>14</b>
<b>Seamless Communication</b> Cyber Commandos offer unique capability for joint force . . . . .	<b>16</b>
<b>Down-the-Road Deployment</b> Dover Reservists support mortuary mission . . . . .	<b>18</b>
<b>A Bright Idea</b> 307th Bomb Wing one step closer to B-52 innovation . . . . .	<b>20</b>
<b>'Dream On'</b> Grissom civil engineer from Nigeria loving life in the U.S. . . . .	<b>21</b>
<b>COVID SCHMOVID!</b> Reserve doctor writes light-hearted book about pandemic. . . . .	<b>22</b>



Lt. Col. Joseph Fefeley performs a final flight inspection of his aircraft before take-off for his retirement flight at Homestead Air Reserve Base, Florida, in December. For more on the Reserve's oldest fighter pilot, see the story on page 13. (Master Sgt. Allissa Landgraff)

## CITIZEN AIRMAN

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Left, Reserve Citizen Airman Col. Meredith Seeley, Task Force Holloman vice commander, plays with Afghan evacuees at Aman Omid Village on Holloman Air Force Base, New Mexico. (Army Private First Class Anthony Sanchez) Right, 1st Lt. Megan Busellato, assigned to the 445th Aeromedical Staging Squadron, Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio, provides an immunization to an Afghan evacuee at Liberty Village, Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey. (Master Sgt. John Hughe)



# Operation Allies Welcome

## Reservists help Afghan refugees transition to new life

Story by Bo Joyner

Lt. Col. Panos Bakogiannis says he will never be the same after his most recent Air Force deployment – a three-month stint at Holloman Air Force Base, New Mexico, in support of Operation Allies Welcome – the Department of Homeland Security-led effort to support vulnerable Afghans as they safely resettle in the United States.

A Reserve Citizen Airman assigned to the 414th Fighter Group at Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, North Carolina, Bakogiannis first heard about the opportunity to help set up operations at Holloman to receive Afghan evacuees on Aug. 25. Twenty-four hours later, he was on a KC-46, along with six other deployers from the 414th FG, in route to what would be one of the most difficult yet rewarding deployments of his 27-year Reserve career.

“It really was a life changing assignment,” Bakogiannis said during a recent interview. “I had the opportunity to work alongside some incredible Airmen as we built the village that would house people whose world had been turned upside down. They came here with nothing, and to be able to get to know

them and help them start their new life was a humbling and extremely gratifying experience.”

Since September, more than 50,000 vulnerable Afghan allies have been temporarily housed at eight U.S. military facilities, where they receive a full medical screening and a variety of other services before moving on to their new home in their new country. Hundreds of Reserve Citizen Airmen have deployed to support Operation Allies Welcome at these eight facilities, including more than 100 who have deployed to Holloman.

More than 7,000 Afghans have spent time at Holloman over the last five months. The initial push to prepare the base for the influx of evacuees was a Herculean effort. In a matter of days, Task Force Holloman was able to erect tents for the 900 Airmen who would support Operation Allies Welcome at the base and assisted in building a living area capable of holding up to 5,000 Afghans.

“When I first got to Holloman we had one tent and one trailer that we worked out of,” Bakogiannis said. “For the first three weeks, we were doing construction in the village as the

Afghan guests are arriving. We’re building up tents and putting people into these apartments as quickly as they were getting built. Apartments were built in a day, fitted in a day and then filled the next day.”

In addition to helping with the establishment of the Airman’s tent city and the Afghan’s village, Bakogiannis served as the “mayor” of Aman Omid Village during his deployment.

“As the mayor, one of my main duties was to conduct shuras – meetings with the male heads of household to talk about problems, address issues, talk through situations and create rapport and feedback so we could improve the conditions and how we were dealing with our guests,” he said.

Bakogiannis said it was somewhat chaotic at the start of the mission as Afghans arrived, sometimes without key documents, money and clothes. “Add in the fact that all of the other government and helping agencies were just getting their operations up and running and our food services providers took some time to get into their battle rhythm, and it was extremely hectic at first.”

The lieutenant colonel said that things were running a lot smoother by the time his deployment ended in early December. “We definitely had some growing pains, but through everything our Airmen have shown great compassion and empathy. I asked our Airmen for the impossible and they delivered.”

Col. Meredith Seeley is another Reservist who deployed in support of OAW at Holloman. As the vice commander of Task Force Holloman, she arrived at the end of August and is projected to be deployed until the end of March.

“My hope is that I will be here for the duration of our mission, and that I will be here when our last guests leave,”

Seeley, who serves as the wing process manager for the 927th Air Refueling Wing, MacDill AFB, Florida, said.

Like Bakogiannis, Seeley said she has been amazed by the Airmen who deployed to support OAW at Holloman.

“The teamwork across all three components represented here – active duty, Guard and Reserve – has been inspiring to witness firsthand,” she said. “Many of the service members here are working outside of their traditional career field. It’s a prime example of multi-capable Airmen coming together and making the mission happen. Many deployed with two to three days notice and very few expectations of what their deployment would entail. However, the Airmen have shown so much motivation, resilience, innovation and determination in taking care of each other and our Afghan guests.”

Seeley said one of the most important roles she was able to fulfill was as an ambassador to the women in the village.

“While many of the women were from westernized cities like Kabul, and had education and successful careers of their own, there were also many who were not used to seeing a woman in a leadership position,” she said. “As the vice commander for the task force, I considered this an incredible opportunity and intentionally dedicated time and effort in the initial build-up to ensure we had safe spaces designated for our women and opportunities for them to feel empowered. We developed a women’s-only shura where the females were encouraged to bring forward their concerns, ideas and suggestions. The women here are encouraged and that drives a true sense of community.”

Like Bakogiannis, Seeley said this deployment has been a highlight of her career, not only because she had the opportunity to work with some incredible Airmen, but because she had the opportunity to build relationships with inspiring and resilient Afghans.

“More than half of our village population is children,” she said. “I absolutely love going to the village after the duty day and interacting with the women and playing with the children. They are so grateful, optimistic and resilient, and their smiles, laughter, stories and affection mean the world to me. While many of their stories are tragic, they are heroic and it is inspiring to see these families so filled with hope. The idea that we – the military members assigned to Task Force Holloman – serve as their first impression of Americans is both an opportunity and a responsibility. When we show them kindness, compassion and empathy, we make an everlasting impact.” #ReserveReady #ReserveResilient ■



Lt. Col. Panos Bakogiannis hands out basic essentials to arriving Afghan evacuees at Holloman. (Army Photo by Spc. Nicholas Goodman)



# Print to Digital

Citizen Airman gradually transitioning to online-only format

Story by Bo Joyner



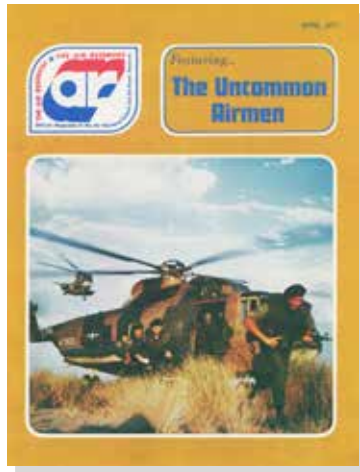
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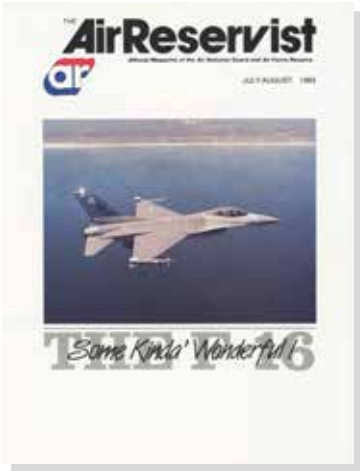
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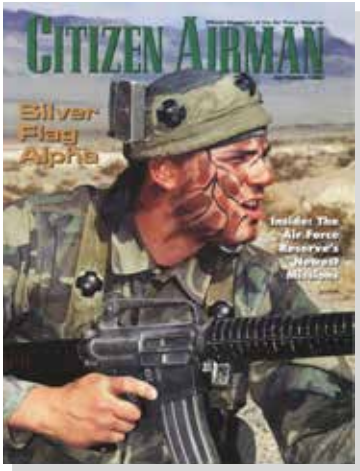
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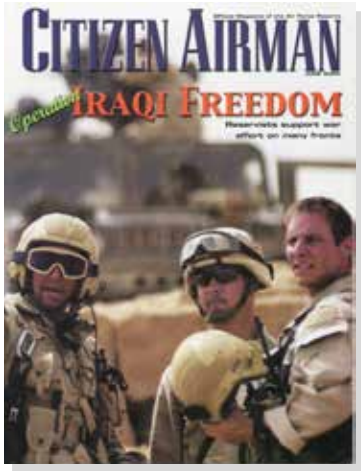
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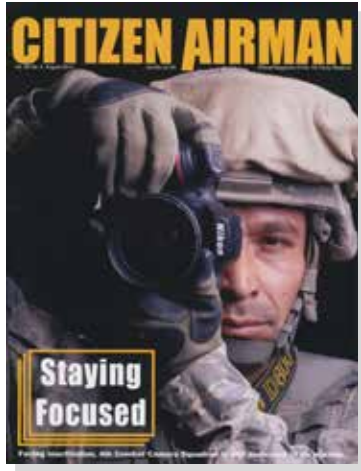
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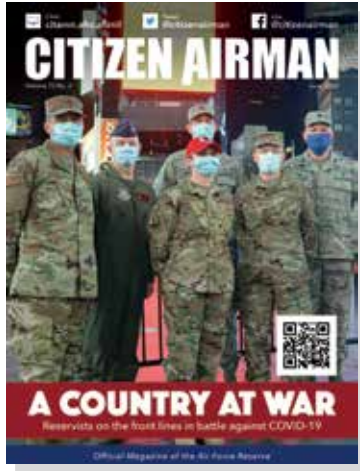
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JUNE 2020



[afrc.af.mil/Citizen-Airman](https://www.afrc.af.mil/Citizen-Airman)

In support of Air Force Reserve Command's strategic priority to reform the organization, AFRC will gradually transition *Citizen Airman* magazine to an online-only format.

*Citizen Airman* has been available in both print and on-line versions since 2005. Traditionally, the print version has been mailed to the homes of all Reserve Citizen Airmen on a bi-monthly basis.

"Our plan is to continue to provide a print version of *Citizen Airman* as we eventually transition to an enhanced digital magazine," said Col. Eric Simon, AFRC's director of public affairs.

Simon said the plan for the enhanced

digital version of *Citizen Airman* will eventually allow for stories micro-targeted at specific audiences, like Congressional members or Reservists in specific Air Force specialty codes, for example.

The colonel added that during the transition phase from print to digital, the print version will feature more "evergreen" feature stories, while the digital version will feature more timely, emerging stories.

"For more than 70 years, Reservists have looked to *Citizen Airman* magazine or its predecessors for critical command information and fascinating feature stories highlighting outstanding members

of the Reserve Citizen Airman team," said Lt. Gen. Richard Scobee, AFRC commander and chief of the Air Force Reserve. "As we transition from print to on-line, I look forward to continue reading about our outstanding Reservists in the digital version of *Citizen Airman*."

The print version of *Citizen Airman* traces its roots all the way back to June 1949, when the *Air Reserve Forces Review* magazine debuted. This magazine kept not only Air Force Reservists informed, but also members of the Air National Guard, the Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps, the Civil Air Patrol and Air Scouts of America. Circulation for

the magazine was around 480,000 copies per issue.

*Air Reserve Forces Review* changed its name to *The Air Reservist* in 1952. *The Air Reservist* served both the Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard communities until 1986 when the magazine's name was changed to *Citizen Airman* and the magazine narrowed its focus solely to Air Force Reservists.

"The information environment is constantly changing and we have to keep pace with those changes," Simon said. "Many people feel print is dead. It's not, though it has shrunk considerably over the last 20 years. However, it has found a

resurgence in many areas.

"Let's be honest, there's just something about having that physical copy in your hands that digital can't replace, but we'll also build up our digital magazine over the next few months to make sure we can reach as many audiences as we can with great stories about our amazing Reserve Citizen Airmen."

During the transition phase, the electronic bi-monthly version of *Citizen Airman* will continue to be produced and posted on the main AFRC web site, <https://www.afrc.af.mil/>. Readers can access the magazine directly by scanning the QR code on the back

*In line with Air Force Reserve Command's strategic priority to reform the organization, Citizen Airman magazine is gradually transitioning to a digital-only publication. To read the magazine on-line, scan the QR code above or on the back cover of this magazine or go to <https://www.afrc.af.mil/Citizen-Airman/>. The images on these two pages feature covers from each of the magazine's nine decades in print.*

cover and on page 9 of this magazine or by going to <https://www.afrc.af.mil/Citizen-Airman/>.

*#ReserveReform*





# An Innovative Idea

## 403rd maintainers earn recognition for engine oil pan hoist



Members of the 403rd Maintenance Squadron work to remove an engine oil pan from a C-130J engine. A team from the 403rd MXS recently submitted its idea of an engine oil pan hoist to AFWERX's Spark Tank competition.



Staff Sgt. Robert Koltas, 403rd MXS aerospace propulsion technician, removes an engine oil pan hoist from an overhead hoist after successfully using it to remove an oil pan from a C-130J engine.

Story and Photos by Staff Sgt. Kristen Pittman

Senior Master Sgt. Michael Lee, Master Sgt. Jessica Davis, Tech. Sgt. Matthew Slaydon, Staff Sgt. Bradford Collums, Staff Sgt. Josh Thompson and Senior Airman Elizabeth Demoran, a team of aerospace propulsion and metals technicians from the 403rd Maintenance Squadron at Keesler Air Force Base, Mississippi, recently participated in the AFWERX Spark Tank competition with their idea of an engine oil pan hoist for C-130J Super Hercules aircraft engines.

Spark Tank is an annual competition inviting Airmen and Guardians to present innovative ideas with the opportunity to procure funding, patent assistance and implementation Air- and Space Force-wide.

While the team's submission fell short of the semifinals of the competition, placing 24th out of 189 entries, their idea is very much alive as it has been granted "Just Do It" status by AFWERX.

"The 'Just Do It' initiative is exactly what it sounds like," said 2nd Lt. Tyler Wiggins, 403rd Maintenance Group executive officer. "According to the email they sent us, the Spark Tank team implemented the JDI in response to years past when submissions made leaders ask, 'Why aren't we already doing this?' Our team didn't win the competition, but this recognition feels like a win knowing they'll receive support and the idea will positively impact the way we do things here and potentially at other C-130 units."

The idea for the oil pan hoist stemmed from the need to remove the oil pan to get to the engine's intake, a part that heats cold air that comes in during flight, preventing icing and loss of operability of the engine.

"What's been happening," explained Lee, 403rd MXS engine propulsion flight chief, "is that over time the intake is overheating, creating bulges in the metal, and the best way to get to it to fix it requires us to remove the 200-pound oil pan completely."

The problem: the method the propulsion shop had been using to remove the oil pan was wrong according to a quality assurance inspection, but there was little guidance for a solution.

This is when Lee invited his Airmen to brainstorm a way to safely, and efficiently, remove and replace the oil pan.

"What we came up with was the idea of a metal hoist that could lower and lift the pan using harnesses," said Lee. "Sergeant Thompson is an aerospace engineer major, so that allowed us access to a CAD (computer aided design) program, and we brainstormed ideas and came up with four different ones."

Lee presented the designs to the metals technicians, and allowed them to decide which would be the most feasible to create.

The result: an apparatus that runs parallel to the engine with a loop on top to attach to the flightline crane or overhead hoist for incremental lifting and

lowering, and four loops on the bottom to attach harnesses that cradle the oil pan.

"The biggest impact from this, aside from it passing quality assurance standards, is that it requires less personnel and less time than how we were doing it before, which frees up personnel for other work that needs to be done," said Lee, whose shop is responsible for overseeing the maintenance of engines for 10 C-130Js and 10 WC-130Js.

The estimated calculation based on the reduction of time and personnel of financial savings is around \$2,500 per intake service, said Lee. The cost to make the hoist was about \$2,700. Do the math, and the hoist pays for itself with just two services, a number they have surpassed in the past year.

With the 'Just Do It' initiative, Lee said the team is receiving assistance filing for a patent for the hoist, and, once it goes through all of the processes of approval, the unit could receive reimbursement for the cost to make its prototype.

"It has to go through testing from engineers and other entities at different levels to make sure it's safe to use," he said. "We've done some stress-testing here. Things generally have to be able to support three times the weight of its intended use, so we've tested the hoist with 600 pounds and it held up fine."

For now, the 403rd MXS is allowed to use the hoist by filling out a risk management assessment.

As for Total Force impact, the Air Force has more than 400 C-130s in its fleet, and Lee said he could see this idea having a widespread impact over time.

#ReserveReady #ReserveReform  
(Pittman is assigned to the 403rd Wing public affairs office.)





## RESERVE CITIZEN Airman



U.S. Air Force Reserve air mobility units provided critical mission support during the Gulf War, helping ensure a swift and decisive liberation of Kuwait from Iraqi invaders. The 328th Tactical Airlift Squadron, Niagara Falls, NY, provided cargo and personnel transport utilizing the C-130E Hercules after the Battle of Kuwait International Airport, the fastest and largest Marine tank battle in history, on Feb. 27, 1991.

Throughout their deployment, 328th Citizen Airmen also transported Explosive Ordnance and Disposal Teams, vehicles and supplies in and out of the airport. In support of Gulf War operations from Oct. 4, 1990 to April 11, 1991, 84 members of the 328th TAS were mobilized. They received the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award for the period of July 1, 1989-June 30, 1991. The 328th TAS has since been redesignated at the 328th Refueling Squadron, part of the 914th Operations Group, Niagara Falls, NY.



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# Fighter to the Finish

## Oldest F-16 pilot in the Reserve retires

Story by  
Master Sgt. Allissa Landgraff

Most people in the military think of their jobs as at least a 20-year sentence. You do the time to get the retirement.

For Lt. Col. Joseph “Hooter” Feheley, a Reserve Citizen Airman assigned to the 482nd Fighter Wing, Homestead Air Reserve Base, Florida, his job was a dream come true. So much in fact, it led him into a 33-year flying career with about 5,000 flying hours under his belt.

Serving in every military campaign since Operation Desert Storm in 1991, Feheley’s retirement came in December at 59 years and 364 days of age.

“If I wanted to do a different job, I could’ve left,” Feheley said. “I earned my retirement and all that stuff years ago. But when you wake up in the morning doing something that you love to do, why change that?”

His first job was as a young stockbroker in Miami, but Feheley knew he wanted more. He decided to take flying lessons locally, and quickly realized he had a passion for the craft.

While he continued to pursue flying as just a hobby, he attended his college reunion, and an old classmate mentioned the potential of a military career to him. Feheley knew he had to try.

Feheley joined the Air Force in 1988 with the hopes of becoming an F-16 Fighting Falcon pilot. Unfortunately, at the time, the position for that fighter jet was unavailable, so he began training for the A-10 Warthog. He flew the A-10 from 1990 to 1994 when he got accepted for his coveted position of F-16 pilot.

So after 20 years of flying his favorite aircraft, what kept him going?



*Lt. Col. Joseph Feheley prepares for his final F-16 flight in December at the age of 59 years, 364 days. (Master Sgt. Allissa Landgraff)*

“The job,” said Feheley. “It’s truly that little boy that never has to grow up. You get to play with the coolest toys on the face of the earth.”

Lt. Col. David Sproehnle, commander of the 93rd Fighter Squadron, gives credit to Feheley’s skill and attests to why he had such a long and successful career.

“He’s knowledgeable about his job, he can execute his job, but yet he’s still humble,” Sproehnle said. “His ability to adapt is what allowed that. Swapping airplanes, keeping up with all the changes in tactics, all the different weapons, all the different systems have constantly evolved, so he’s really grown with the airplane.”

Feheley also credits the people he worked with and the aircraft.

“The people in the squadron are why you stay, and it’s what you remember,” he said “You start for a national honor thing where you want to do something for your country, and then you realize, ‘wow, it’s pretty cool flying airplanes.’ It’s the people that keep you here for 33 years.”

Feheley said it is the freedom the jet offers that helped him to enjoy his career and his time in the military. The flexibility and dynamic aspect of the aircraft kept him enthralled through everything, to include his last flight on Dec. 10.

“I am proud and honored to have served with someone who has ‘been there, done that,’” said Sproehnle. “He served our country for a long time, and he should be considered a hero for what he has done.” #ReserveReady #ReserveResilient ■





Col. Reginald Trujillo, 403rd Mission Support Group commander, presents Senior Airman Adeola Shafe, food distribution journeyman for the 403rd Force Support Squadron, with a certificate from an Air Force Reserve Command inspection team. Shafe was recognized as a "Hard Charger" during a unit effectiveness inspection that took place in November.

# Not Your Average Senior Airman

## Reservist leaves life in Nigeria, fulfills dream of serving

Story and Photos by Staff Sgt. Kristen Pittman

Senior Airman Adeola Shafe is not the average senior airman in the United States Air Force.

For starters, at age 42, he's about 15-20 years older than the average senior airman.

Then there's his demeanor. Not to say the average senior airman isn't an exemplary servicemember, but there is a certain air upon approaching Shafe that is warm and inviting and stoic and purposeful and determined all at once.

And then he speaks and there's his accent. While he resides in New Orleans, it's not the Cajun patois native to the area, but a dialect from an entirely different continent.

Most stories involving someone packing up and venturing across the globe are more of the bildungsroman type. They take

place early in the subject's lives, when they don't have much to lose and everything to gain. Not when they have a good job and a family of their own.

Encouraged by his mother, and a little reluctant, Shafe left a life he had built in Nigeria in September 2018 at the age of 38, to see what opportunities the United States had to offer him.

Prior to coming to America, Shafe admits he really did not have much interest just based on the fact the he had already built a life in Nigeria. Having researched beforehand different cities in the United States, and concluding that opportunity was everywhere waiting to be tapped into, Shafe set his sights on New Orleans and began his quest for employment.

He had one particular career-field in mind.

"Back in 2014 or '15, I had worked for Nigeria's Ministry of Defence for a few months, and I would see these people looking so elegantly dressed. I asked someone who they were and they told me they were American military members," he said. "I remember telling my friends that if I ever went to America, I would join the military."

Having only planned to give it one month to see if he could fulfill this dream, Shafe hit the ground running, contacting recruiters from various branches with the mindset that if he was not able to join the military by the end of the month he would return to Nigeria.

But he ran into a roadblock: his age. He found he exceeded the Army and Marine Corps' age limits.

"It was very frustrating. As soon as I would tell a recruiter my age, that would be it," said Shafe. "One time I refused to tell the recruiter my age over the phone. I said, 'Just let me come,' but still when I went, it was a Marine recruiter, he said 'Oh sorry' and that was it."

That first month went by with no luck on the enlisting front, but Shafe's mother insisted he stay and keep trying.

"That's when I got a job as a sheriff's deputy," he said. "Considering I had had a good life in Nigeria and a degree, I didn't want to come here just to be a taxi driver or work at a restaurant or something like that. My mother suggested if I couldn't join the military, I could join law enforcement."

While landing that job fulfilled his need for income to provide for his two sons, his wife and his mother, Shafe didn't see the job itself as necessarily the fulfillment he knew the military would bring him, so he continued to reach out to recruiters.

"Finally in September of 2019, at 39, I found an Air Force Reserve recruiter who said he could get me in before my 40th birthday," he said. "We only had two months, so we had to get everything done quickly. I took the ASVAB and everything and was able to join."

At the age of 40, Trainee Shafe was off to Basic Military Training at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, Texas, where he realized his nearly decade old dream of joining the ranks of those "elegantly" dressed people he saw back in Nigeria.

"The proudest day of my life was the day I put on this uniform," he said. "You know when you have a dream and you see that it's being fulfilled? It just gives you this joy. I would do this for free. I remember my recruiter saying, 'You're not even asking how much you're going to be paid' and it was because I didn't care. The fact that I'm in the military gives me what money can't give me. It gives me joy. When you have satisfaction of the mind, it is unquantifiable."

Senior Airman Shafe now serves in the Air Force Reserve's 403rd Wing at Keesler Air Force Base, Mississippi, as a food distribution assistant for the 403rd Force Support Squadron.

Shafe puts all of his energy and zeal into his work because he wants to be heard, for his hard work to be his voice that motivates those around him to also give their all.

"The word that comes to mind when I think of him is: sharp. He's just sharp," said Tech. Sgt. Phyllis Jones, Shafe's supervisor. "You give him any task and he'll get it done flawlessly and in record time, plus all of his other responsibilities, career development courses, Airman Leadership School. You name it, he excels at it."

It took little time for Shafe to make an impact, earning recognition and awards for a year of work at the Air National Guard's Combat Readiness Training Center in Gulfport, Mississippi, assisting in the base's mission to train and equip thousands of deploying troops from all over during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

He was also recently recognized by an Air Force Reserve Command inspection team as a "Hard Charger" for his outstanding professionalism, technical expertise and demonstrated excellence.

"The sky is the limit for Senior Airman Shafe," said Jones. "His professionalism and manners and his work ethic—he's just an awesome troop and an asset to the 403rd Wing."

In regard to the future, Shafe hopes to land a full-time opportunity serving in the military. He's also working to bring his entire family here, as his wife is still currently in Africa.

"I do miss the fact that I'm not here with my full family," he said. "My wife is still back home in Nigeria, so I'm balancing parenting and my job while also still trying to stabilize myself here. But I don't let it weigh me down. I'm just so grateful to be here, wearing this uniform, and every day I derive my strength from the fact that I am fulfilling my dream." #ReserveResilient (Pittman is assigned to the 403rd Wing public affairs office.) ■

Shafe moved to America from Nigeria in 2018 and has fulfilled his dream of serving in the U.S. military.





# Seamless Communication

Cyber Commandos offer unique capability for joint force



*Top: Senior Airman Kimberly Nelson, 919th Special Operations Communications Squadron radio frequency technician, checks the configuration of a data satellite at Duke Field, Florida. Left: Staff Sgt. Brett Clayton, Senior Airman Jay Brown and Senior Airman Jefferson Alvarez set up and align the angle of an antenna to a satellite during the November drill weekend.*

Story and Photos by Michelle Gigante

Communications Squadron, Duke Field, Florida, to

The ability to communicate freely and readily over a secure network is becoming more and more important for combatant commanders in today's world as technology progresses.

To leverage this capability, the warfighter relies on cyber professionals like those at the 919th Special Operations

provide seamless communication and agile support in rapidly changing environments.

"This is the only communications squadron in the Air Force Reserve that directly supports special operations," said Maj. Angela Shalduha, 919th SOCS commander.

Shalduha said there are two sides to the squadron's mission – the base support provided to Duke Field day-in and day-out and supporting Air Force Special Operations Command.

Airmen in the 919th SOCS continually train to maintain skills using video teleconferencing equipment, voice, data and video as well as intelligence surveillance and reconnaissance services. For example, the cyber commandos

use broadcast systems at exercises and deployments for downloading commercial and military satellite video feeds.

"Our Airmen continually deliver command and control capabilities at every request," said Chief Master Sgt. Timothy Thoner, 919th SOCS special missions flight superintendent. "In order to meet this demand, our Citizen Airmen have to coordinate time away from their civilian professions and personal lives to enable the success of exercises and contingency operations around the globe."

The team conducts cross utilization training to maintain strategic capabilities for contingency operations around the world. The squadron uses a strategic approach to maintaining unit readiness by deploying equipment and people to support exercises for joint task force efforts throughout the year.

"The partnerships we've developed with other Guard, Reserve and active-duty units make it possible for us to train at locations around the world," said Thoner.

Recently, 919th SOCS Airmen provided computer access, as well as phone lines and satellite radio networks, to connect four geographically separated command elements throughout a two-week Air Force exercise, Rally in the Rockies.

The exercise was a multi-day training exercise in Colorado, Utah and Wyoming. It involved a scenario designed to test the abilities of Air Force Reserve units to execute rapid global mobility missions in challenging, contested scenarios.



*Left: Nelson and Master Sgt. Cole Watts, 919th SOCS cyber systems operations technician, configure a communications network system. Below: Senior Airman Icy Walley, 919th SOCS radio frequency technician, connects the antenna cable to a high frequency whip antenna at Duke Field, Florida.*



"In the past year, we have had members deliver this unique capability in support of 12 exercises across the country," said Thoner. "Our support to these exercises as well as overseas contingency operations demonstrates 919th SOCS Airmen are always up to the task."

Many 919th SOCS members have volunteered for training opportunities across the country in the past year, and many are traditional Reservists who volunteer to enhance their individual readiness.

"It is always exciting when we go out to the field because it offers us an opportunity to try new things," said Senior Airman Kimberly Nelson, 919th SOCS radio frequency technician. "In each case, we are not only enhancing

our readiness skills but also building relationships and collaborating throughout the Air Force and even across the Department of Defense."

Nelson has participated in more than 10 exercises around the United States in the last two years.

"We are always looking for more opportunities to support AFSOC missions and exercises," said Shalduha. "There are a lot of very unique missions in AFSOC and we see the experiences our Airmen gain as invaluable steps to maintaining the same capabilities as our active-duty counterparts." #ReserveReady (Gigante is assigned to the 919th Special Operations Wing's public affairs office.)



# Down-the-Road Deployment

## Dover Reservists support mortuary mission

Story by Tech. Sgt. Katie Maricle, Photos by Jason Minto

Compared to the 6,825 miles between Dover Air Force Base, Delaware, and Al-Udeid Air Base, Qatar, the quarter mile to get from the Air Force Reserve 512th Memorial Affairs Squadron and the Fisher House for Families of the Fallen doesn't seem like it would be considered a deployment.

However, three Reserve Citizen Airmen at Air Force Mortuary Affairs Operations are serving in a deployed status, just as they would be overseas – but they only have to travel down the street from their home unit. They serve

with their teammates at AFMAO's main building, which shares a parking lot with the 512th MAS.

"Sometimes that's a disadvantage because it doesn't feel mentally like a typical deployment," said Tech. Sgt. Kyle Robinson, a Reservist who serves as a Fisher House manager.

The nature of AFMAO's sacred mission brings with it unique challenges and work tempos. Deployed Total Force Airmen in the Services career field dedicate their time over roughly six months to this important mission.

Providing care, service and support to families of the fallen in the Fisher House was Robinson's first choice when he learned he would deploy to AFMAO.

"I like to care for people, and this seemed like a good fit," he said.

Master Sgt. Ernest Davis, another Reserve Fisher House manager, has deployed several times to AFMAO since he joined the 512th MAS in 2002, but this is his first time working with families of the fallen.

"It's a great mission. It's a learning experience and a very unique experience,"



Left to right, Senior Airman Franck Yonkeu, Master Sgt. Ernest Davis and Tech. Sgt. Kyle Robinson, Air Force Mortuary Affairs Operations Fisher House managers, inside the Dover Air Force Base Fisher House. The three Reservists are deployed from the 512th Memorial Affairs Squadron at Dover.



Top left, Robinson organizes reading material in the Dover Fisher House. Top right, Yonkeu fixes the folds on a bed cover. Left, Davis cleans the floor in the main hallway.



said Davis. "It's opened my eyes to the family aspect of things. I've always worked on the other side of [the mission]."

Senior Airman Franck Yonkeu, the third Reserve Fisher House manager, understands that while a deployment to AFMAO is not typical in the Air Force, serving in the Fisher House provides a unique way to honor the fallen and care for their families.

"You still serve the fallen, and you have that same honor, just in a different place," he said.

While the Fisher House is in a separate complex from AFMAO, Robinson said many of the deployers, whether they have traveled from a neighboring state or across the country,

have a strong bond regardless of their deployed unit.

"We get to spend the holidays together and there are always opportunities for us to get out and spend time together," he said.

Although their unit is just next door to AFMAO, two of the three Airmen live out of state. Robinson lives and works in New York and Yonkeu resides in Maryland. They are among the 30 deployed personnel who stay in base lodging during their deployment and away from their families. Davis lives locally and is able to commute to work each day.

Although this mission can be very challenging, it also brings deployers, both from Dover and around the Air

Force, a sense of honor in pride for their contribution to the mission.

"If I had to choose where to [deploy] again, I would choose the Fisher House," said Yonkeu. *#ReserveResilient* (Maricle is assigned to Air Force Mortuary Affairs Operations.)





# A Bright Idea

## 307th Bomb Wing one step closer to B-52 innovation

Story and Photos by  
Senior Master Sgt. Ted Daigle

*Lt. Col. Warren Carroll, assigned to the 307th Bomb Wing explains potential locations for USB ports aboard the B-52 Stratofortress during a tour at Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana. Carroll was instrumental in securing initial funding to generate a prototype for the new technology. Inset, Carroll holds a maplight on a B-52.*

Lt. Col. Warren Carroll and Maj. Brandon Wolf, two Reserve Citizen Airmen assigned to the 307th Bomb Wing, brought a proposed B-52 Stratofortress innovation one step closer to fruition at Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana, in December.

Engineers from the B-52 Stratofortress Systems Program Office followed up on the two Airmen's proposal to place combination USB port, LED maplight systems aboard the 60-plus-year-old bombers.

The idea gained traction during a StrikeTank competition last June when it won a "Golden Ticket" and \$15,000 to develop a prototype.

LR Werx, the AF Werx spark cell for the 307th BW, sponsored the project with the idea of increasing mission effectiveness and lethality.

"We carry electronic tablets on our missions and constantly reference them for checklists, technical orders, landing data and other performance information needed to make in-flight calculations," said Carroll. "But the batteries on the tablets only last a few hours."

Since the long-range capability of the B-52 extends some missions beyond 30 hours, the short battery life of the tablets is a liability since they carry information critical to mission success.

To compensate, aircrews carry several large lithium battery packs to ensure power to the tablets throughout long missions. However, those batteries are a potential fire hazard.

Carroll and Wolf's idea would mitigate the problem by eliminating the extra batteries brought on board.

"By having USB ports, we significantly reduce the chance of a fire potentially destroying a jet," said Carroll.

Kenneth Pistone, an engineer with the B-52 SPO at Wright Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio, was part of a team that came to assess the best way to install the ports and maplight.

Pistone gathered data to determine the best locations to place USB ports so all aircrew would have access.

"We could have preliminary tests complete in six to nine months providing there are no funding concerns," said Pistone.

Carroll said this latest innovation is unique among the LR Werx proposals.

"You see a lot of innovation efforts at the support function level, and those are great," said Carroll. "But this is the first one where our spark cell pushed a solution that can be used directly in combat." #ReserveReform

*(Daigle is assigned to the 307th Bomb Wing's public affairs office.)*

# 'Dream On'

## Grissom civil engineer from Nigeria loving life in the United States

By Staff Sgt. Alexa Culbert



"Dream on!" That's what 12-year old Afolabi Jacob was told when fellow Nigerians learned about his ambitions of being an engineer.

Jacob knew at age 12 he wanted to be an engineer. Unfortunately for him, in Nigeria that's a big dream unless you're from a wealthy family. Jacob did dream on, and in 2015 he moved from Nigeria to the United States to attend college and play soccer for Purdue University.

"I made the decision to move to the United States because I wanted to go somewhere I could use most of my talents," the 434th Civil Engineer Squadron electrical systems engineer apprentice at Grissom Air Reserve Base, Indiana, said. "If I were in another country right now I could have just been playing soccer, but the U.S. is one place where you can do multiple things at the same time."

*Senior Airman Afolabi Jacob, 434th Civil Engineer Squadron electrical systems engineer apprentice, followed his dreams and is proud to be a part of the Air Force legacy. (Doug Hayes)*



With a love of both soccer and music, Jacob was able to do both of those things while attending school and working.

"I was able to finish school and do all of those things together which is something that made the U.S. unique to me and why I chose to come over here."

While his primary passions are engineering and aviation, it all began with a love for arts and crafts as a child, specifically kites and paper airplanes.

"This one time I made a paper airplane that went all the way into the clouds and I never found it," he said. "A couple of days later I saw a real plane and thought it looked like the paper airplane I made. I then began to build interest and said 'when I grow up I'm going to design aircraft.'"

Shortly after arriving in the states, Jacob began studying engineering at Purdue. While there, he was introduced to the U.S. military through the school's Army Reserve Officer Training Corps program.

He spent two and half years in the program, but realized the Air Force was a better fit for him.

His interest in aviation drove him toward the Air Force, but he was disappointed to learn that his immigration status barred him from many of the aviation career fields.

"When I joined I wanted to do something with aircraft, but I came here with a green card so I couldn't get a job like that with the level of security that's required, so I took what I could," he said.

Jacob went on to enlist in the Air Force and became an electrical systems engineer. It wasn't in aviation, but it fell under another passion of his and put his degree to use. Regardless of his job, he said he doesn't care what he does in the Air Force, as long as it's serving the country.

"Legacy is the reason I joined," Jacob said. "When people ask which benefits made me join the Air Force, I say nothing, it was the legacy. I don't regret doing this because I'm doing what I wanted to."

"The people who fought all of the battles for us to be where we are today and the legacy that they left is the reason why I'm still here."

In July 2021, six years after first arriving to the United States, Jacob obtained his U.S. naturalization and citizenship through his military service, which opens the doors to more career opportunities within the aviation field.

When Jacob is not serving at Grissom, he's working as a contracted engineer in Indianapolis.

He someday hopes to expand his horizons and explore other opportunities in the country, but hasn't decided on a specific path just yet.

"I wouldn't want to say goodbye to Grissom like that. This is a great family and it's my origin," he said. "If I chose to stay in the military this is where I started, so I will just see what works best, but I wouldn't want to just leave Grissom like that." #ReserveResilient

*(Culbert is assigned to the 434th ARW public affairs office.)*



# COVID SCHMOVID!

## Reserve doctor writes light-hearted book to help people cope with pandemic

Story and Photos by  
Staff Sgt. Juliet Louden

Col. (Dr.) Colleen Kelley, 910th Medical Squadron commander, poses with her recently published book, "COVID SCHMOVID," in front of the 910th Medical Squadron building at Youngstown Air Reserve Station, Ohio.

Shift after shift, an emergency room doctor saw the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic, fighting to help keep her deathly-ill patients alive and watching the devastation it caused to so many families.

This doctor, despite the darkness surrounding her from the virus, decided to use this situation as an opportunity to take a light-hearted approach to help people stay healthy by writing a book.



Kelley wrote the book as a light-hearted approach on how to stay healthy during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Col. (Dr.) Colleen Kelley, 910th Medical Squadron commander, and author of "COVID SCHMOVID: A Primer for Survival", was sitting in her office for another stressful and frustrating Zoom meeting with other doctors she works with at the Southwestern Vermont Medical Center in Bennington, Vermont. As the meeting progressed, the tone was anything but light. Kelley interjected with a response that changed the course of the meeting.

"What we all just want to say is, 'COVID schmovid!' Can't we just be done with all of this?" exclaimed Kelley while leaning back in her chair and tossing her arms.

Kelley's comment created a lighter feeling throughout the rest of the meeting.

"It was the first time in over an hour that anyone had smiled," said Kelley. "And it showed me how deeply people were affected: families, children, friends, healthcare workers, military, all of us. Some of us have lost everything, some folks, even their lives."

As the meeting continued, Kelley found a crumpled napkin on her desk and started to write. Twenty minutes later she had written a long poem with one stanza dedicated to each of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommendations. Kelley then read the poem during the zoom call.

"After sharing this poem during the meeting and then reading it to co-workers, friends and family, they all said I should write a book," said Kelley. "Finally inspired by confidence and based on their support, that's how this book came to be."

Kelley's experience harkens back to a childhood moment that convinced her she wanted to be a doctor.

"I was riding my bike and my toe got stuck in the spokes," laughed Kelley. "My grandfather helped me up and put a bandage on it, and it instantly made me feel better. In my four-year-old mind, if that is what doctors do, that is what I want to do for the rest of my life. From that moment I knew I was going to be Dr. Kelley."

Kelley keeps an old polaroid picture of herself on a little bike next to her grandfather that serves as a frequent reminder of her calling.

Helping people is a value that runs deep in Kelley's family. "My grandfather was a Navy surgeon at Pearl Harbor when it was attacked," said Kelley. "He worked for 48 hours after the attack to save people. After World War II, he went on to become a psychiatrist and continued a life of helping people. I wanted to spend my life the same way."

Both of Kelley's roles as 910th Medical Squadron commander and an emergency room doctor allow her to help others.

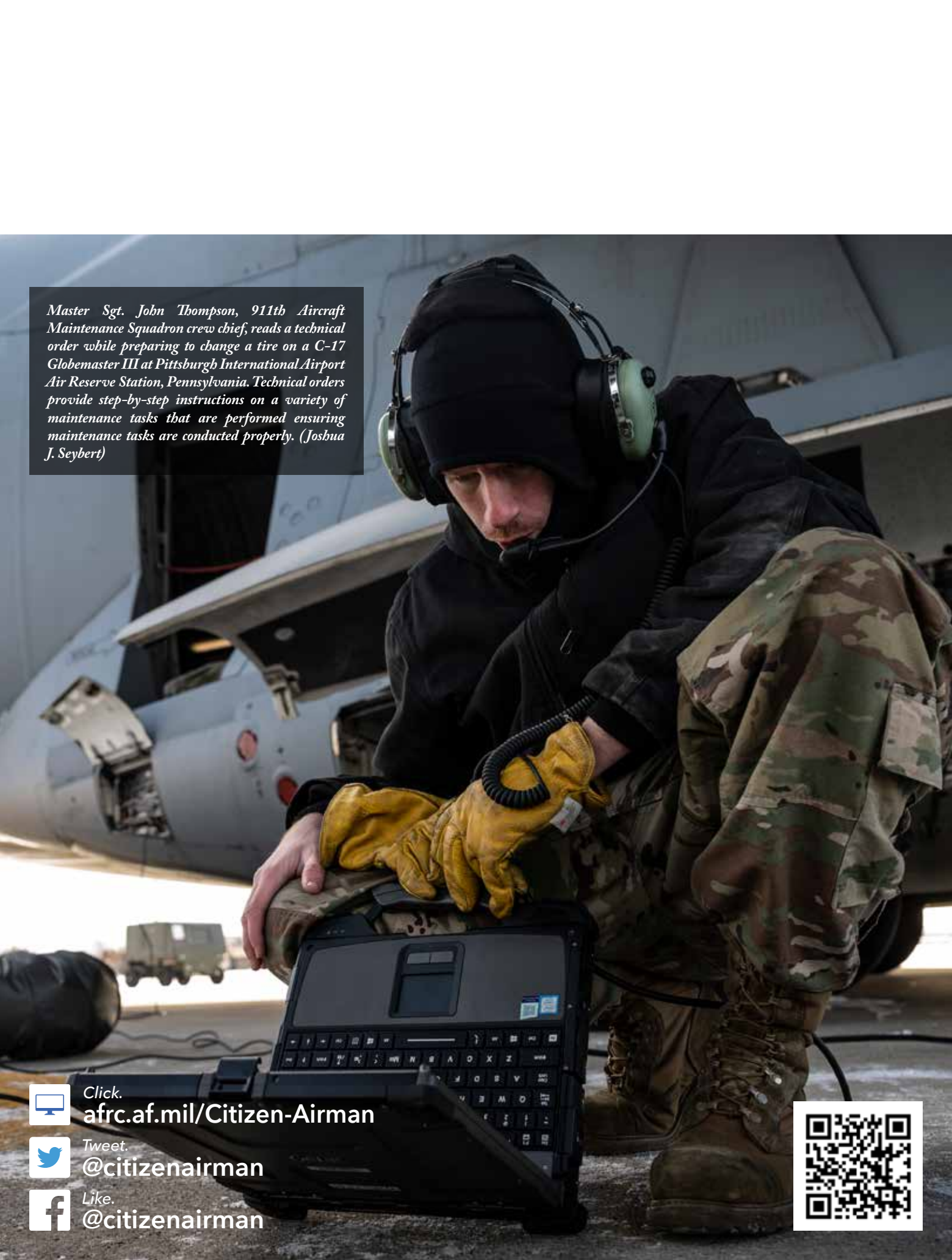
"There was a little kid in the ER with a really cool mask," Kelley said with a smile. "I read him part of the book. He was fascinated, and behind his eyes, you could see him smiling from ear to ear. His reaction gave me a sense of hope that we can get through this together."

Not only is the book a way to help people get through the pandemic, but all the proceeds from the book are being donated to two local organizations in Kelley's hometown in Vermont. She chose organizations that provide services to people who are most likely to have been hardest hit by the COVID pandemic.

"This was an exciting project that I hope helps to lighten the frustration and fatigue that we all have experienced due to the COVID-19 pandemic," said Kelley. "While doing what is needed to help keep ourselves and our families healthy, perhaps we can smile together while hoping for a better future for us all." #ReserveResilient

(Louden is assigned to the 910th Airlift Wing's public affairs office.) ■





*Master Sgt. John Thompson, 911th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron crew chief, reads a technical order while preparing to change a tire on a C-17 Globemaster III at Pittsburgh International Airport Air Reserve Station, Pennsylvania. Technical orders provide step-by-step instructions on a variety of maintenance tasks that are performed ensuring maintenance tasks are conducted properly. (Joshua J. Seybert)*



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